



# OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

Mississippi Forestry Commission  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Ethel, Mississippi Earns National Recognition for Wildfire Preparedness**

Ethel, Mississippi -- Because of its efforts to reduce the vulnerability of homes and landscapes to wildfire, Ethel, Mississippi has earned Firewise Communities/USA recognition from the National Firewise Communities Program.

The town of Ethel worked with the Mississippi Forestry Commission to conduct a wildfire hazard assessment and develop a plan to address safety concerns. Residents then worked together to implement the plan.

"Ethel, Mississippi took a great leap forward in preparing for wildfires. The community is located in one of Mississippi's hottest counties and the community recognized this fact. I had great local cooperation on the Commission's portion of the project. Ethel is on the national Firewise Communities map now and ready to move forward with wildfire protection", said Leslie Blackwell, Mississippi Forestry Commission Firewise Coordinator.

Ethel, Mississippi is the fifth community in Mississippi to be recognized as Firewise Communities/USA, joining many other communities nationwide that have been recognized since the program's inception in 2002.

"Achieving Firewise recognition is not a quick or easy process. Ethel has done an outstanding job of creating a local Firewise Task Force and implementing Firewise principles," said Jim Smalley, manager of the Firewise Communities program. "By preparing homes, structures, and landscapes *before* a wildfire occurs Ethel has dramatically increased the chance that homes and structures will be protected when a wildfire occurs."

Working through the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), state forestry agencies support the Firewise Communities/USA recognition effort. The program is a nationwide initiative that recognizes communities for taking action to protect people and properties from the risk of fire in the wildland/urban interface. This program is of special interest to small communities and neighborhood associations that are willing to mitigate against wildfire by adopting and implementing programs

tailored to their needs. The communities create the programs themselves with cooperative assistance from state forestry agencies and local fire staff.

Fire-prone communities can work with local professionals to earn Firewise Communities/USA status by meeting the following criteria:

- Enlist a wildland/urban interface specialist to complete a community assessment and create a plan that identifies agreed-upon achievable solutions to be implemented by the community.
- Sponsor a local Firewise Task Force Committee, Commission or Department, which maintains the Firewise Communities/USA program and tracks its progress or status.
- Observe a Firewise Communities/USA Day annually, dedicated to a local Firewise project.
- Invest a minimum of \$2.00 per capita annually in local Firewise projects. (Work by municipal employees or volunteers using municipal and other equipment can be included, as can state/federal grants dedicated to that purpose.)
- Submit an annual report to Firewise Communities/USA that documents continuing compliance with the program.

Communities interested in earning recognition may visit [www.firewise.org/usa](http://www.firewise.org/usa) for more information.

*Firewise Communities/USA is a part of the National Firewise Communities Program, an interagency program designed to encourage local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in the effort to protect people and property from the risk of wildfire. The National Firewise Communities Program includes Firewise Communities workshops, Firewise Communities/USA recognition program, and support for fire organizations and community groups. The National Firewise Communities Program is sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team, a consortium of wildland fire agencies that includes the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, the National Association of State Foresters, the US Fire Administration, and the National Fire Protection Association. For more information, visit [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org).*

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